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I Am Navy Medicine

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Dr. Uriel Lucky, M.D., Naval Hospital Pensacola



I began working with the Navy on a year to year contract basis. At that time it was called the Global War on Terror contract and based on filling in for the military physicians who were being deployed to Iraq and leaving their impeneled patients without care.

In 2005, after 25 years in primary practice in a rural town in Alabama, I decided it was time to change gears and become an employee of the U.S. government. The rewards and the personal accomplishments of being in a small partnership family practice had been tremendous and the blessings innumerable, but the hassles of running an office and fighting with insurance companies while trying to remain true to my integrity had become too great a battle for me. In addition to being board certified, I had even pursued and achieved the "Added Credentials in Geriatric Medicine," which I still maintain, so that I could grow old with my patients and still provide the best quality care.

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Banner Navy Medicine has a support system that will stand behind every reasonable patient management decision I make or assist me in making a reasonable decision in patient care.

I began working with the Navy on a year to year contract basis. At that time it was called the Global War on Terror contract and based on filling in for the military physicians who were being deployed to Iraq and leaving their impaneled patients without care. Am I happy working for the Navy? Are my professional goals and personal goals being met? Is the practice of medicine, which is my calling and my love, less complicated? For me the answer to all of these questions is a resounding yes. Did changing from being an employer to an employee create some struggles? Yes, because my mindset had to obviously change, but I can honestly say that I have lost less sleep and taken fewer antacids than I was doing 10 years ago.



Joining the Navy Medicine team is one of the best professional and personal decisions that I ever made in my life.

Navy Medicine has a support system that will stand behind every reasonable patient management decision I make or assist me in making a reasonable decision in patient care. It is an organization that wants me and my colleagues to achieve our professional goals.

Have there been some disadvantages? There are a few. As a civilian health care provider, I work with the military, but I am not part of the military. I always have the support of the military providers, but I still consider myself an outsider to some extent and rightfully so. I am not required to take the same oath that they take. I will never be in a combat situation on foreign soil or on a ship with cramped living space or be literally at the beck and call of having to pack my bags tonight to be at a make-shift hospital on the other side of the world within 48 hours. I am also not expected to be present at 0430 to run 2 miles and perform a required number of pull-ups and sit ups prior to coming to work on any given day.

Another disadvantage is that the environment of practice I work in is not static, but fluid. I cannot remember working with many people for more than three years and most of the time even less, because the various branches of the military move most of their personnel to different areas of assignment. Saying good-bye is difficult most of the time because friendships and mutual respect abound in this organization. However, the positive is that I have found myself visiting friends and colleagues in Honolulu and Tampa, and I am planning trips to visit others as far away as Sicily.

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Looking back at the changes I made in my career and reviewing the benefits gained and the hardships tackled, would I do it again? Would I recommend it to a fellow colleague? My response to that question is for me, it was one of the best professional and personal decisions that I ever made in my life.

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